



A new paradigmatic framework for integrative medicine, and its implications for medicine and politics[☆]

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: One of the major shortcomings of the discussion concerning integrative medicine is often an insufficient awareness of the peculiarity and multi-dimensionality of the object in question, on the part of critics and advocates alike.

Methods: Focusing on homeopathy as an example, this paper points out that the essence of this unique concept of healing cannot be wholly understood without a basic knowledge of the dimensions that constitute it.

Results: The three traditions of thinking on which it is based date back to antiquity, namely: *lógos*-thinking, *hómoion*-thinking and *iásthai*-thinking, i.e. thinking in terms of rationality, similarity and healing.

Discussion: While modern medicine is, for the most part, driven by reasoning in terms of quantification and generalisation, this at the cost of neglecting the remaining two dimensions, – homeopathy, due to its methodology, finds itself constantly searching to find a balance for all of its constituents.

Conclusions: This model of a three-dimensional art of healing may serve as a paradigm for integrative medicine to recollect an awareness of its own strength and multi-dimensionality, and, finally, also for medicine and politics in general.

1. Introduction

In spite of the abundance of scientific work on the part of integrative medicine, its recognition would appear to be sluggish. In the case of homeopathy, extensive campaigns aimed at undermining its acceptance within the world of scientific medicine and market access, are underway. Taking a closer look, the arguments of the opposing camp are based mainly upon a specific kind of rationalism now prevailing in modern societies, resting, as it does, on quantitative reasoning, measurability, reproducibility, etc. [1].

The thesis of this paper is that in order to do justice to many of the various complementary and integrative approaches toward the art of healing, it would be necessary to broaden one's personal horizon, and implement further perspectives for judgement other than exclusively relying on numeric data and the outcome of studies. Accordingly, apart from the mainly quantitative work in terms of clinical trials, multidisciplinary research in terms of the humanities of medicine, its history and theory, etc. should also be considered – for a truly holistic assessment of integrative therapies [2]. Without this shift of thought, the long-term

changes in the consciousness and mentality of individuals, including scientists, and their dependence on socioeconomic conditions and developments, might not be realised or taken into account for what they really are.

For example, homeopathy has been exposed to criticism and hostilities ever since its introduction some 200 years ago. But, whilst at that time the controversy was still addressing philosophical concepts such as vital force, dynamic action of remedies, suppression of symptoms or the status of semiology in medicine, – the main focus of argumentation has now been narrowed down to merely statistical and quantitative problems: e.g. whether in high dilutions any molecules of the original substance may remain, or, whether randomised clinical double-blind studies have a significant result or not.

What the campaign against homeopathy seems to miss, is an understanding of what homeopathy actually is. The defamation does, for example, not consider the fact that the usage of high potencies, or indeed not, is only an internal question within homeopathy itself, and that it can be practiced with potencies both low or high, which is what Hahnemann, in fact, truly did [3]. It is also obvious that this plot is unaware of

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homeopathy's wide and deep perception and understanding of the patient, its elaborated methodology, its safety, sustainability [4], humanism, and, last but not least, its multitude of therapeutic successes.

From a broader perspective, this particular campaign would appear to be a symptom of a wider picture also seen within many other fields, be it economy, jurisdiction, education, science, medicine or politics. This contemporary "Zeitgeist", whilst lacking a substantial understanding of "what it is all about", is determined by a fixation on numbers and data, these being but a partial aspect of phenomena whose entire meaning it is seemingly unable to grasp as a result of its constricted methodology and world view.

2. The example of homeopathy

Taking homeopathy as an example, the attempt is now made to show that the fate and future of any kind of integrative medicine may crucially depend on how we conceptualize and think of it: small or big, defensively in terms of evidence-based-medicine (or the like) or proactively in categories of epistemology and philosophy.

To this end, a holistic conception of homeopathy is now being suggested in a sense that it embraces, and rests upon, three dimensions of world perception or three ancient traditions of thinking: *lógos*-thinking, *hómoion*-thinking and *iásthai*-thinking – according to recent historical, philosophical as well as philological and cultural research [5,6].

In order to both attack, as well as to defend, homeopathy seriously, there may, in the first instance, be a need to understand what this means, in terms of epistemology, art of healing and political culture. The categories developed and presented here may well be taken in a *pars pro toto* sense and be applicable to other forms of integrative medicine as well.

2.1. Homeopathy's *lógos*-dimension

Homeopathy's *lógos*-dimension should not be too difficult to either recognise or demonstrate. It was founded by Samuel Hahnemann (1755–1843) as a rational therapy, during the period of German Enlightenment, when progressive doctors attempted to elevate medicine to the level of a rational science, and possibly even a mathematical one. Within the trendsetting epistemic frame of thinking of the time, Hahnemann did his best to conceptualise homeopathy as a medical doctrine that is scientific, learnable, teachable, generalisable, reproducible, provable, etc. Accordingly, he entitled his 1810 published seminal work "Organon of rational therapeutics" [7,8].

2.2. Homeopathy's *hómoion*-dimension

Besides its salient rational appearance, however, homeopathy also comprises a number of other dimensions. Venturing deeper into its content, it may be realised that its focus and methodology is not primarily concerned with matter, causality, physics, chemistry, mechanics, etc., but rather about *qualities*, both diagnostical as well as therapeutical. Instead of perpetuating the common doctors' view that symptoms are caused by material issues within the body that need to be purged by emetics, laxatives, diaphoretics, etc., for Hahnemann the symptom picture of a patient was the equivalent of a *qualitative* detuning of the vital force of an individual, to whose peculiar *qualities* the healing remedy has to match in a relation of *similarity*. As such, Hahnemann (so to say) reintroduced the ancient *hómoion*-thinking into the art of healing. And this was (and still is) oblique to predominant *lógos*-thinking.

2.3. Homeopathy's *iásthai*-dimension

Regarding his view of the actual mechanism of healing, Hahnemann abandoned and, in fact, denied treatment by palliatives and contraries, but instead embraced the principle of similars, claiming that diseases might be cured by the capacity (or potency) of a remedy to produce like symptoms in healthy humans. The concept not to alleviate or appease

illness, but instead to *challenge* and even *aggravate* it, e.g., not to reduce fever through the use of antipyretics, but to administer a remedy that has the potential to *aggravate* it, again transgressed the customary logic of counteracting evils by direct combat or elimination. However, even here, Hahnemann was connecting to an ancient tradition of thinking known as *iásthai*-thinking.

2.4. Significance of these dimensions

Summing up: to adequately understand and practice homeopathy in accordance of its broad and multi-dimensional foundation by Hahnemann, one has to be aware of these three powerful traditions of thinking, all of which can, in fact, be historically traced back to their origin in pre-Socratic ancient Greece. Knowing their genealogies and their socio-economic background, might eventually prove to be essential, and enlightening, for a holistic and groundbreaking assessment of what homeopathy (and possibly other integrative therapies) is actually about.

3. Genealogical background

3.1. *Lógos*-thinking

The origin of *lógos*-thinking in the sense of modern rationality can be dated to the 6th century BC and located to the Greek colonies in Ionia, i. e. on the west coast of modern Turkey. There, prompted by the recent invention and rapid spread of coined money, the first philosophers, all at once, displayed a new way of thinking in terms of abstractness, impersonality, universality, homogeneity, boundlessness, etc. It was, as if the characteristics of the new money, being a general medium of exchange, means of payment, measure of value, store of purchasing power, etc., would be projected from commerce within the polis out into the cosmos. Instead of appreciating the natural variety and diversity of qualities of the lifeworld, as was the case in Homeric times, each of the pre-Socratic philosophers contrived a counterintuitive worldview based on just one abstract and impersonal principle, be it water, air, fire, number, spirit, atoms or the like [9].

What was even more significant concerning the novel paradigm of money, was its precariousness. While natural things have a stable intrinsic value, the worth of money proved to be unreliable as it depended on its circulation, trust on the part of the market participants and its sanction by the state. But, if this man-made contingent economic system rested solely on convention (*nomos*), subject to potential change at any time, – why should the old myths of Gods, cosmogony, virtues, ethics, etc. not also rest on mere convention? Rather than being unquestionable, from now on they would be taken to be disputable and modifiable.

3.1.1. The power of monetarism

Roughly recapping recent research, this would appear to be the origin of modern *lógos*-thinking, derived out of the spirit of monetarism. In the meantime things had progressed, and it is as if money – beforehand an invention of man – had assumed autonomy and, just as a virus will do, began to reprogramme everybody it infected in such a way that the infected subject would become servile to the reproduction of the "virus", i.e. money.

The individual human being, acting in the false conviction of being a free and critical autonomous subject, would thus unconsciously do everything that facilitates the spread and turnover of money. E.g. when people are framing a world view in which humans are conceived as being nothing but greedy and needy subjects, dependent on satisfaction through consumer consumption of commodities produced by companies whose aim it is to maximise profit, etc., this may create an environment and society which could not be more convenient for money, that would, in the end, turn out to be the only real (and profiting) subject in that scenario [10].

Against this background, modern medicine – with its standards of

generalisability, reproducibility, standardisability, quantifiability, its requirements such as costly double-blind trials and practices such as expensive public health campaigns, etc. – may appear in a new light. What all this really brings about is the turnover of money in respective industries, foundations, institutions and corporations. The question, however, of whether this kind of thinking and acting might improve, rather than undermine, the health of humankind, may be difficult to be realised, let alone be assessed from within this kind of thinking and acting.

To be in a position to do this, one may have to take into account two more dimensions or traditions of thinking.

3.2. *Hómoion-thinking*

One of these additional powerful traditions of thinking that homeopathy encompasses, may be called *hómoion*-thinking. It appeared for the first time in history as a philosophical concept with the pre-Socratic philosophers under the notion “*hómoion-homoío*”, emphasizing the perennial and archaic relationship between similars that attract, like, and enjoy each other. Just as relatives, kins, clans and families have a natural tendency to keep together, so it was assumed that elements, (such as earth, water, air and fire), or qualities, (such as sweet, bitter, sour, hot, etc.) would tend to stick together, each with its own kind. Nutrition, growth or formation of organisms could thus be explained by the attraction of similar components, and e.g. the purging effect of certain substances be ascribed to their capacity to bind similar noxious agents, drawing them towards and with themselves, resulting in the eventual excretion of both [11].

In religion, the relationship between similars had always played a crucial role, in fact it may be considered to be the basic principle of all religions, in this case the *hómoion*-connection between God or spirits and believer. Also in philosophy, there are early occurrences of this way of thinking, e.g. when Socrates, in the 5th century BC, although ardently trying to rationalise everything by means of the new *lógos*-thinking, at the same time always remained faithful to his *daimónion*, a kind of inner voice unfathomable to logical reflection. Plato, in the 4th century BC, also outlined his theory of ideas and the way of partaking in them (*méthexis*) in analogy to the familiar *hómoion*-relationship with Gods [12].

In medicine, *hómoion*-thinking may well have been the basis of so-called humorism, which originally acknowledged “myriads” (*myría*) of various humors, i.e. qualities to be found inside the body. These, however, were later systematically reduced, by the son-in-law of Hippocrates in the 4th century BC, to the number of four humours (blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile) [13]. Later still, these were academically combined with the four so-called primary qualities (dryness, heat, moisture, and cold) of Galen, then with the four seasons, four ages, four temperaments, and so forth. Similar relations may be found in the traditional Chinese concept of *wu-xing* (five phases or elements) or the Ayurvedic doctrine of *tridosha* (*vata*, *pitta*, *kapha*).

So, although the natural perception and experience of a wealth of qualities may have been one of the most basic and important dimensions of ancient medicine, under the rising hegemony of *lógos*-thinking it became pushed back and hidden under a jumble of academic and scholastic rationalism. In the occident, it was Paracelsus’ mission in the 15th/16th century AD to criticise this and re-emphasize anew all the precious signs, hints, analogies and relationships amongst organs, plants, minerals, planets, etc. [14], – all based on *hómoion*-connections, which were overlooked by academic medicine for centuries or even millennia.

3.3. *Iásthai-thinking*

Finally, the concept that the “hurting” can also cure, another basic principle or dimension of homeopathy, reaches back to Greek myths of the Homeric age in the 7th century BC. It may be called *iásthai*-

thinking, according to the classical oracle saying “*ho trósas kaí iásetai*”, literally meaning “the one who has hurt will also cure”, this being related to the wound of king Telephos that could only be healed by his adversary Achilles who had caused it [15,16].

Bravely facing the violating agent and cultivating, taming and integrating the “threatening” into a culture of advanced healing, rather than just trying to destroy or eliminate it, proves in fact to be a maxim and practice traceable throughout the history of philosophy, literature, theology and medicine.

Plato’s Socrates, in the 5th century BC, for example, described the punishment of unjust acts as the second-best way to bliss, because only by suffering the penalty does the soul become purified, while without this it remains vile. For Aristotle in the 4th century BC e.g. catharsis, i.e. purification of the soul, may come about, when spectators of a tragedy experience “compassion and fear (*eléou kaí phóbou*)” with, and of, the fate of the hero, thus outweighing and overcoming their own suffering and anxieties and get rid of them [17]. Lucian in the 2nd century AD described how a student was “hit by the arrow of a wise philosopher amidst of his soul like a beam of light”, so that the only option left to him was “to do as Telephos and beg the one who had wounded him to heal him” [18].

In the book Ecclesiastes (of the Old Testament) which originated in the 3rd century BC, the preacher Salomo compared “the words of the wise” with “thorns and spikes”, “given by a shepherd” [19], i.e. putting them into the context of hurting with benevolent intention. Finally, the joyous Christian message has been based on the narrative that Jesus, despite his being castigated and crucified, resurrected two days later, again to be present amongst his disciples. The theology deduced from this was the precept, to follow Jesus Christ as a new paradigm and not to fear, but to accept pain and death as being the exemplary means of defeating them.

In medicine, an example of concepts using the *iásthai*-principle in its broadest sense may be the theories of “excitability” of William Cullen and John Brown in the 18th century AD. According to them, the human organism is assumed to be a reactive entity, whose reactions, however, have to be initiated and provoked by external (more or less hurting) stimuli [20].

4. Discussion

4.1. Modern medicine

As it turns out, homeopathy appears to be a well-balanced art of healing, exemplarily encompassing and integrating the whole range of dimensions, in terms of *lógos*-thinking, *hómoion*-thinking and *iásthai*-thinking. The same should of course apply to any kind of medicine claiming to be an art of healing.

By contrast, modern medicine seems to predominantly rely upon isolated *lógos*-thinking. In this frame of thinking, however, (almost) no provision is made to take into account *hómoion*- or *iásthai*-relations. In fact, in its economy-driven busyness no perception remains of the possibility that anything may be wanting. Hence, modern medicine may be diagnosed as suffering under an amnesia of *hómoion*- and *iásthai*-thinking.

To make it as clear as possible, that each of the three dimensions mentioned so far is (so to say) a world of its own and that none of them can, as a matter of principle, be translated, transformed or reduced to any of the other dimensions expounded here, it may be helpful to imagine these (*lógos*, *hómoion*, *iásthai*) as a coordinate system with an x-, y- and z-axis. As long as one is fixed to and moves on the x-axis only, no matter how precisely or sophisticatedly, there is little chance to ever realising what might be happening on the y- or z-axes.

Analogously, life (and medical practice) that is limited to the *lógos*-axis, is, and necessarily remains, one-dimensional. Only insofar as it also considers, e.g., the *hómoion*-dimension, would it become two-dimensional, by opening up another totality. That would indeed be a

kind of quantum leap, compared to one-dimensionality. If, in addition, the *iásthái*-principle would also be taken into account, a three-dimensional world would be created, in which true primordial life could again begin, flourish and be completed.

4.2. Outlook at the world

Looking at today's world, one might be obliged to diagnose a distinct lack of *hómoion*- and *iásthái*-thinking as well. From politics, economics, natural science, social sciences and so-called humanities to the realm of administration, commerce, public relations, etc., everything would seem to be operating within the blinkers of *lógos*-thinking. As progress, success and excellence are generally rated in terms of income, profit, number of publications, impact factors, fundings, awards, etc., all activity and interest is geared towards a multiplication of numbers and augmentation of data. In doing so, however, one is apparently stuck to the x-axis and thus, from this position, has no chance of grasping the other two axes and, so to say, real life as a whole.

On the other hand, many people, especially in modern western countries, feel that they are not being understood or taken into account by their politicians. Whilst the result of extensive and costly surveys may seem conclusive to *lógos*-driven leaders, this may not really coincide with what ordinary people may think, feel, or are able to verify. Unspoiled humans are – from authentic three-dimensional experience – often well aware of their *hómoion*-connections and *iásthái*-challenges.

In contrast, statistics (and their outcome) depend on hypotheses, preconceptions, models, simulations, reification of objects, abstraction from context, isolation of entities, etc., as well as on sponsoring and support from relevant industries, commercial purpose, academic ambition, etc. They are, as such, more error-prone and at risk of manipulation and deception.

Relying on numbers and upon data and binary logic only, in fact, having been educated and socialised within this framework of thinking, *lógos*-driven modern humans are prone to drive any thought to its extreme and thus be easy prey for “-isms” of all kind. Being torn between e.g. capitalism, socialism, fascism, nationalism, egalitarianism, liberalism, universalism, humanism, scientism, social Darwinism, etc., political parties may tend to suggest and push ideological one-sided measures which would indeed benefit the interests of some citizens, but discriminate others, thus polarising society.

Finding holistic and sustainable solutions, however, may well be impossible without also considering the other two dimensions, those of *hómoion*- and *iásthái*-thinking. Among uncorrupted citizens as well as in foreign countries these two dimensions may well have survived in a more vital form than among the ruling classes of an international so-called hyper-culture.

Primordial *hómoion*-connections, as far as they are still being felt and cultivated, assure people of experiencing an original sense of relatedness, kinship, belonging or identity, be it familial, ethnic, religious or traditional. Hence, without acknowledging and integrating this basic dimension of life no unifying constitutional patriotism, let alone world ethos, may ever be possible. And *iásthái*-thinking, i.e. the principle that through pain one can be healed, through violation grow stronger, and through yielding find victory, etc., may preserve a vivid consciousness that prosperity and progress, as well as peace or integration etc., may come at a cost in terms of effort, sacrifice and even suffering.

In ignorance or neglect of these two dimensions, *lógos*-driven politicians, analysts, strategists, diplomats, etc. continue to unswervingly follow their agendas of, on the one hand, domestically pleasing potential voters with unsecured promises and amenities and, on the other, confronting and upsetting foreign-policy partners with ideologic *lógos*-driven dogmatism.

4.3. The paradigm of homeopathy

In contrast, homeopaths in the succession of Hahnemann consider

their patients to be individuals, each of them uniquely composed and constituted by the dimensions of *lógos*-, *hómoion*- and *iásthái*-thinking. They are taken seriously and holistically with their needs, fears and feelings. In this case, each of the three coordinates would be balanced in liaison with the other two, in order to sustain and enjoy a three-dimensional world and life.

So, what homeopaths are doing in everyday practice could be a blessing for the world, if politicians, scientists, teachers, journalists and other influencers of public opinion would be willing to learn from them. After all, just like medicine, politics, education, diplomacy, etc. are practical arts and sciences, dealing with human beings. Counterbalancing the corroding effects of untamed abstract money-*lógos* on society as well as on geopolitics would actually be of tremendous avail for humankind.

5. Conclusions

Besides pushing forward scientific research in terms of quantitative clinical studies, advocates of integrative medicine might be well advised not to completely abandon qualitative humanistic research, in terms of history and theory of medicine. Instead of overspending themselves inside the treadmill of standards and requirements imposed upon them by the reductionist rationality of their competitors, they may also realise, keep in mind, and emphasise its multi-dimensionality and argue on the basis of decent and scientifically well-founded self-assurance.

Similarly, these findings may also be applied to other realms of life, such as politics or education. Instead of proclaiming ever new *lógos*-driven political campaigns, programmes and investments, it would often just suffice to coordinate *lógos*-, *hómoion*- and *iásthái*-thinking in a well-balanced way – according to the paradigm of a consolidated three-dimensional understanding of homeopathy.

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